

# **== Soviet Propaganda Alert ==**

No. 15

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## SUMMARY

Major Soviet propaganda developments and themes relating to the U.S. in May and June included:

Counterpropaganda. The Central Committee plenum on ideology, held June 14-15, criticized Soviet propaganda efforts and proposed a uniform system of "counterpropaganda" to oppose Western propaganda.

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The Reagan Administration. The Soviet media continued to attack the Reagan administration in harsh and abusive terms, while refraining from extensive commentary on the Democratic Party and its leaders. Recent Soviet coolness toward the idea of a U.S.-Soviet summit meeting may stem from a reluctance to give President Reagan a potential propaganda advantage before the 1984 Presidential elections.

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Arms Control. Soviet arms control propaganda played up the official Soviet endorsement of a nuclear freeze and replayed standard themes of U.S. aggressiveness and Soviet reasonableness and goodwill.

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Public Opinion and Peace Movements in Western Europe. The British election, the Williamsburg summit, and the Prague Peace Assembly offered little for Soviet propagandists to cheer about. Andropov's statement on a Baltic nuclear freeze seemed designed primarily to assuage Scandinavian public opinion.

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Poland. Soviet media launched their harshest attack on Poland since martial law but generally ignored the Pope's visit to Poland.

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Central America. According to Soviet propaganda, the U.S. "interventionist policy" is escalating the conflict in El Salvador, waging an "undeclared war" against Nicaragua, and turning Honduras into a base for armed aggression against Nicaragua.

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Washington, D.C.

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## COUNTERPROPAGANDA

There's an ideological war going on out there. And the Soviet Union isn't winning it. At least that's what the Soviet leadership seemed to be saying on June 14-15 at the Central Committee plenum on ideology.

General Secretary Yuri Andropov was almost apocalyptic about it. "The future of mankind," he stated, will be decided by the outcome of the "confrontation, unprecedented in the entire postwar period by its intensity and sharpness, of two diametrically opposite world outlooks, two political courses-- socialism and imperialism." We must, he said, tell the people of the world the truth about socialist society, its advantages, and its peaceful policy, and we must do so in an understandable and convincing way. At the same time, we must skillfully expose the "lying, subversive nature of imperialist propaganda." "What we need," concluded Andropov, "is a well conceived uniform system of counterpropaganda" which is dynamic and effective (Pravda, June 16).

Konstantin Chernenko, the party secretary responsible for ideology, also called for large-scale "counterpropaganda," both domestic and international (Pravda, June 15). His specific recommendations to the propaganda sector included:

- o Accentuate the positive. According to Chernenko, "we have no reason to take a defensive position on any question of principle. But we cannot say that our foreign policy propaganda is always sufficiently active and masterful in demonstrating the superiority of socialism."
- o Improve quality. We must "enhance the argumentation..., appeal, and journalistic qualities of the materials addressed to foreign audiences while explaining in an easy-to-understand way the concrete contents of our internationalist policy of peace. Otherwise, we cannot hope for success in foreign policy propaganda in the long term."
- o React more quickly. "Let us not deceive ourselves. If we explain an event superficially, or report it belatedly, later on we shall be obliged not to persuade, but to dissuade, which is more difficult."
- o Employ more modern technology. "It is time to realize," Chernenko said, "that technological backwardness constrains the effective use of our propaganda potential." He complained of paper shortages, lack of printing facilities, and backward television technology, and reproved Gosplan and the ministries responsible for such deficiencies.

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Abroad, the Soviet counterpropaganda campaign will still be carried out by TASS, Novosti, Gostelradio, and other propaganda agencies. Chernenko called upon them to work hard and ordered the International Department of the Central Committee (CC) to coordinate the campaign "in the best possible way." (Some recent and perhaps related personnel changes in these agencies are noted in "Soviet Propaganda Alert No. 12.")

Within the Soviet Union, the counterpropaganda campaign will attempt to combat bourgeois ideology, counteract foreign ideas, and neutralize their effect on the thinking and behavior of Soviet citizens. Chernenko praised efforts already under way in Moscow, the Ukraine, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Estonia, and parts of the Soviet Far East--all areas where Soviet citizens come into contact with foreigners and foreign ideas. He urged the appropriate CC departments to provide local party organizations with materials that "help to expose the intrigues of hostile propaganda." (In Moscow the counterpropaganda effort even includes a crackdown on jokes about Vasilii Chapaev, a Soviet civil war hero.)

#### THE DANCHEV CASE

If the case of Vladimir Danchev is any indication, perhaps Chernenko is right about the need for improvement. It all started when listeners to Radio Moscow's English Service began hearing some strange things:

- o Andropov, in his Spiegel interview, reaffirmed the "Soviet policy of aggression" and explained Soviet efforts "in achieving military superiority and increasing the threat of nuclear war" (May 1).
- o "The Soviet Union, with the exception of Afghanistan and some other hot spots in the world, rejects war as a means of settling international disputes" (May 18).
- o "The population of Afghanistan plays an increasing role in defending the country's territory against bands infiltrated from the Soviet Union. Reports in Kabul say that tribes living in the eastern provinces Nangarhar and Paktia have joined the struggle against the Soviet invaders" (May 23).

What happened was that Vladimir Danchev, a 35-year-old newscaster for Radio Moscow's English Service, was straying from the prepared script. Sometimes he read the news straight. But on occasion he tampered with the wording, apparently in impromptu fashion while he was actually on the air. According to Western news reports, Danchev, a Tashkent native who had strong feelings

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about the war in Afghanistan, did so as a singular kind of protest against Soviet policy.

Embarrassingly, Soviet authorities were among the last to notice. Danchev's ideological deviations went on for perhaps several months, until May 23. That was bad enough. But the authorities caught up with Danchev only two days after the Western press began to report the strange goings on.

Things are almost back to normal again in Moscow. Danchev is no longer on the air. Agence France-Presse (AFP) reports that according to Radio Moscow officials, he was "summoned before a disciplinary committee, fired from his job, and escorted to his home town of Tashkent...where he is now in a psychiatric asylum" (June 21). The Washington Post reports, moreover, that several top Radio Moscow officials, including the editor-in-chief of the radio's World Service, have been reprimanded (May 27). According to AFP, there will be no more live Radio Moscow broadcasts --unless they are strictly monitored by a censor empowered to cut off the transmission (June 21).

#### THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION

The Soviets regularly attacked the Reagan administration on a wide variety of foreign and domestic issues. Among these issues, three were prominent: the nature of Reaganism, U.S. political "factions," and the possibility of a U.S.-Soviet summit meeting.

Soviet public statements about the Reagan administration have tended to shift ground in the last year. After the 1980 U.S. Presidential elections, the Soviets repeatedly asked aloud whether it was possible to deal reasonably with the Reaganites. Their public answer was pessimistic: there is some possibility for a serious agreement with the U.S., but no great likelihood. Perhaps the best we can do, they said, is to wait Reagan out.

With the approach of the 1984 Presidential elections, Soviet attention has increasingly turned to Reaganism and the U.S. political process. The following exchange on a Radio Moscow program (June 10) was typical:

Does Reaganism have "some objective causes in the purely economic sphere"? Perhaps the influence of the "military-industrial complex"? (Anatolii Doronin)

Not really. The whole point is that this influence existed earlier. The American bourgeoisie, you see, is not homogeneous. There is a constant struggle between factions within the American ruling class. Some factions support detente, as in the 1970s. Others, on the extreme right wing,

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do not, and it is this faction that seized the White House in 1980. (Aleksandr Bovin)

"Evidently a contributory factor is the transfer of capital to military branches of industry in connection with the economic crisis." (Doronin)

No, that is a constant factor. Eisenhower--strange as it may seem--was the first to warn Americans about it. The U.S. military-industrial complex has become stronger, and it naturally exerts an enormous influence on U.S. policies. But another group of the ruling bourgeoisie will come to power, and although the military-industrial complex will remain the same, U.S. foreign policy can change. There is no strict link here. (Bovin)

According to Bovin and other Soviet commentators, the Reagan administration essentially represents an attempt to take social and political revenge for the defeats the United States suffered in the 1970s. The Reagan stand on restoring America's greatness is a response to the loss of client regimes such as Vietnam, Iran, and Nicaragua. The tough Reagan stand on the Soviet Union is a result of an "extremely primitive" philosophy of history--the Reaganites see the hand of Moscow in everything they do not like.

Such lines of analysis perhaps explain the sharp differentiation, in Soviet propaganda, among "factions" on the U.S. political spectrum.

On the Republican side, Soviet spokesmen were sharply and increasingly critical of the Reaganites. They continued to attack the morality of the Reagan administration, but in harsher terms than previously. Vadim Zagladin, first deputy chief of the CC International Department, in speaking of U.S. policy, asserted that the "supreme, ultimate evil" is a policy that is fraught with the threat of war, no matter what conceptions motivate that policy (Sovetskaia Rossiia, June 5).

Moreover, in contrast to their long silence during the initial phases of the Watergate scandal, the Soviet media were quick to report the "snowballing scandal" over the Carter briefing books. Soviet propagandists accused President Reagan of trying to evade the responsibility for "these dirty intrigues" and stated that the assertions made at the Reagan press conference in June "in no way correspond to the facts" (Moscow Television, June 29).

On the Democratic side, Soviet propagandists were much more restrained. There was no comprehensive Soviet discussion of the Democratic Party, although there was brief mention of some of

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the Presidential candidates (Moscow Television, June 28). There was scant criticism of Democratic party leaders or policies. By and large, the Soviet media did little more than repeat the Democrats' criticism of the Reagan administration and cite Democratic statements on specific issues such as arms control.

A good example was the serious and circumspect Soviet treatment of the recent visit to the USSR by Averell Harriman, a figure long associated with Democratic administrations. Andropov praised Averell Harriman's "fruitful activity" as U.S. ambassador to Moscow 40 years ago and stated that the Soviet people give Averell and Pamela Harriman "their due for their adherence to the cause of strengthening mutual understanding between the Soviet and American peoples, their efforts at improving relations between the USSR and the United States" (Moscow TASS in English, June 2).

Finally, the Soviets backed away publicly from a U.S.-Soviet summit meeting. In recent public statements, Andropov expressed skepticism about the possibility of a summit meeting, and in a June 21 TASS interview, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko for the first time spoke of "preconditions" for any such meeting, including "a certain degree of mutual understanding on major issues" and a "desire on both sides to actually strive for positive developments, even better, for a breakthrough" in relations.

If Soviet media commentary on the question of a summit meeting is any indication, Gromyko's "preconditions" may reflect a Soviet reluctance to provide President Reagan with the gloss of a foreign policy success during or just before an election year. According to Valentin Zorin, if a summit meeting is not "for propaganda or election purposes but is geared to a businesslike and constructive dialogue, there can be no opposition to a summit meeting." But, he warned, "the Soviet Union will not take part in anybody's political game," referring to what he charged were efforts to clean up President Reagan's "bad image" (Moscow Radio in English, June 18). In short, Soviet propagandists may have begun to contend with the possibility of four more Reagan years.

#### ARMS CONTROL

Arms control issues continued to dominate Soviet propaganda in May and June. As the START, INF, and MBFR negotiations resumed in Geneva and Vienna, Soviet commentators clung tenaciously to standard Soviet themes:

- o The Soviet Union seeks only equality and identical security and proposes reductions in strategic and intermediate-range nuclear arms accordingly.

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- o The U.S. wants military superiority and unilateral Soviet disarmament.
- o The U.S. is obstructing all arms control negotiations.

In a major propaganda demarche, however, the Soviet government for the first time officially endorsed the concept of a nuclear freeze. At the June 16 session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, "a simultaneous qualitative and quantitative freeze by all nuclear powers of all nuclear armaments possessed by them" was proposed (Izvestiia, June 17). Soviet commentators hailed the idea as "simple and clear..., requiring neither puzzling calculations nor lengthy talks and arguments." An agreement could be reached, they claimed, if only there were goodwill on the other side (Moscow Television, June 18).

#### Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START)

The latest U.S. proposal on reductions of Soviet and U.S. strategic missiles drew a quick Soviet rejection. According to Soviet commentators, it essentially seeks to limit land-based missiles, "which make up the backbone of the Soviet Union's defense potential," and it ignores "constructive Soviet proposals" for "deep reductions in all types of strategic weapons" (Krasnaia zvezda, June 10). The U.S. position on START is geared to obtaining "a one-sided military advantage," not an "honest accord" (Pravda, May 27).

Congressional votes to fund the development and testing of the MX missile were also denounced. Soviet propagandists condemned President Reagan's "arm twisting, disinformation, and deliberate lies" in forcing passage of the MX authorization (Moscow Domestic Service, May 26). They also contended that the MX missile is a first-strike weapon and, as such, an integral part of the Reagan administration's plan to achieve military superiority (Moscow Radio in English, May 26).

This, Soviet propagandists asserted, the Soviet Union will never allow to happen. "Faced by necessity," it will take "retaliatory steps to consolidate its defense capability, including the deployment of corresponding new strategic systems" (Pravda, May 27).

#### Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF)

Soviet propagandists repeatedly lauded the Soviet offer to reduce its medium-range nuclear arms in Europe to the level of British and French missiles and warheads. At the same time, they derided U.S. proposals that would require the Soviet Union to dismantle its medium-range weapons in both the European and Asian parts of the USSR. The "deliberate unacceptability of

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such proposals is so obvious," declared the Soviet government, that they mean only one thing: U.S. "reluctance to seek mutually acceptable solutions based on the principle of equality and identical security" (Pravda, May 27).

Soviet bluster was increasingly evident on INF issues, too. The Soviet Union threatened to lift its declared unilateral moratorium on SS-20 missile deployments in Europe. Second, the Soviet Union threatened to install missiles in Eastern Europe to counterbalance U.S. forward-based nuclear weapons in Europe and other NATO nuclear arms. Third, it will "take necessary countermeasures having the territory of the United States itself in view" (Pravda, May 27). Soviet spokesmen have studiously avoided saying what this means, although they publicly have denied that the Soviet Union will attempt to put missiles into Cuba.

#### Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR)

"Complete, realistic, and clear-cut." "Of a compromise character." "Preserves everything positive that has been accomplished during the Vienna talks." That's how the Soviet press described the "draft comprehensive agreement" submitted by the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) states at the newly resumed MBFR talks on June 24 (Pravda, June 24).

The gist of the WTO proposal, according to the Soviet press, is that irrespective of disputes over the current number of NATO and WTO troops, the reduction of troops and arms in Central Europe should begin now. Specific provisions include measures for: (a) troop reductions to a ceiling of 900,000 on each side; (b) procedures for reductions, with each signatory state with sizable forces in Central Europe bearing "a considerable part" of the overall troop cuts; and (c) verification, with observers invited "on a voluntary basis" to monitor major troop cuts, and with three or four permanent observation posts on each side.

The Soviet Union, it should be noted, has seldom taken the propaganda lead on MBFR issues, preferring to leave that to the East Europeans. East European MBFR delegates have played a visible role in the negotiations--in this case, it was the Czechoslovakian delegate who submitted the WTO draft agreement. The East European press has actively covered the MBFR talks, and is frequently cited in the Soviet press.

#### PUBLIC OPINION AND PEACE MOVEMENTS IN WESTERN EUROPE

Soviet propaganda was uncharacteristically on the defensive in many matters of concern to Western Europe, particularly in the following cases.



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Thatcher's Reelection. Soviet spokesmen had relatively little to say about the British elections on June 9, either before or after. This relative silence was in marked contrast to Soviet efforts to influence the West German elections in March.

The sweeping Thatcher victory was difficult for Soviet propaganda to explain away. By orthodox Marxist tenets, Britain's "enormous unemployment" and "economic blind alley" should have prevailed in the elections. Nevertheless, Soviet observers tried to rationalize, conservative control of the mass media, the Falklands crisis, a divided opposition, and a "certain temporary, seasonal improvement" in the economy had carried the day (Moscow Domestic Service in Russian, June 10).

Williamsburg. Soviet propagandists stressed that the Williamsburg summit demonstrated U.S. double-dealing. President Reagan's real purpose at Williamsburg, they said, was to discuss the Soviet military threat and the need for Western solidarity. Nevertheless, with "imperial arrogance," he and his advisers waved aside the West Europeans' demands that the U.S. reduce its high interest rates and renounce the artificially high currency exchange rate. Washington vaguely promised to study such questions, but in essence it continues to transfer its own economic difficulties onto the shoulders of its allies (Pravda, June 3).

Prague Peace Assembly. The East European sponsors of the "World Assembly 'For Peace and Life, Against Nuclear War'" boasted that approximately 3,000 participants from 132 countries gathered in Prague (TASS, June 26). But they could claim little more. Many prominent figures in Western peace movements refused to attend. The three delegates of the West German "Greens" were so angered by attempts to prevent them from meeting with "Charter 77" dissidents that they sent a letter of protest to Czechoslovakia's President Gustav Husak. Antigovernment protesters held a small demonstration in Prague's Wenceslaus Square. Western press commentary was so negative that the Soviets and East Europeans felt compelled to protest (Moscow Domestic Service in Russian, June 24).

The assembly's final document repeated standard Soviet themes on questions of war and peace, though without direct mention of the United States. Soviet commentaries on the assembly were more explicit in denouncing the U.S. (TASS, June 26).

Baltic Nuclear-Free Zone. At a June 6 dinner in honor of visiting Finnish President Mauno Koivisto, Andropov stated that the Soviet Union "is prepared to facilitate the creation" of a nuclear-free zone in northern Europe and "to study the question of substantial measures concerning Soviet territory adjoining the zone." It is also ready to discuss the question of "giving

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nuclear-free status to the Baltic." According to most observers, this was meant primarily to mollify Scandinavian public opinion, which has been greatly ruffled by the reported presence of Soviet submarines in the territorial waters of Sweden and Norway.

#### POLAND

For months, Soviet propaganda has pushed a consistent line on Poland: Solidarity has lost. Normalization is under way. But because of Western subversion and a few remaining counterrevolutionaries, vigilance is still the order of the day.

In recent weeks, however, Soviet observers have been more vigilant than usual. In the sharpest media attack on Poland since the imposition of martial law, the Soviet journal New Times criticized "liberal ideas" expressed in the prominent Polish weekly Polityka. How, for example, can Polityka allow it to be said that political crises are inevitable in a socialist society? If this were true, even a Marxist-Leninist "formation" would sooner or later exhaust its constructive possibilities. New Times charged that "Polityka, whose first page contains the words 'workers of the world, unite,' seems to consider it normal to propagandize views that are alien to proletarian, communist ideology" (May 6).

The significance of the New Times article is not entirely clear. It can be read as an attack on Deputy Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski (the former editor of Polityka) and a warning to the current Jaruzelski leadership. Yet, other Soviet articles have routinely cited Jaruzelski and other Polish leaders as if there were no problem. Pravda approvingly cited parts of Jaruzelski's closing speech to the recent plenum of the Polish United Workers' Party (June 4). In Poland, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the ominous fact is that Soviet propaganda translates readily into practice.

Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland passed almost unnoticed in the Soviet media. Pravda, for example, reported the Pope's arrival and departure, and very little else. It briefly acknowledged that the visit had helped "achieve further progress in the matter of internal stabilization and national conciliation" (June 25). Judging by the extent of its coverage, however, it was much more enthusiastic about Warsaw's new trolley-buses, Poland's railroad development plans to 1990, and Poznan's international fair than it was about the Pope. Between June 17 and 30, Pravda gave the Papal visit no more than a dozen lines in three or four short notices. Other Soviet media provided comparable coverage.

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## CENTRAL AMERICA

Soviet propaganda focused on U.S. "interventionist" policy in Central America and generally avoided mention of Soviet and Cuban involvement. The U.S., it was charged, supports "terrorist regimes" in Latin America, even the most odious ones, and labels as communist any country where "the popular masses" are striving for self-rule. This is "classic colonialism," which is condemned by the entire world public, even West European government leaders (Moscow Television, June 23).

Soviet propagandists severely criticized what they charged were preparations for increased U.S. involvement in the region. They depicted the U.S. diplomatic reshuffling in Central America and the State Department as a commitment to an exclusively military solution (TASS International Service, June 28). Noting the formation of a White House "Central American policy propaganda group," they predicted a growing campaign to "brainwash" the American public through "disinformation and lies" (TASS International Service in English, June 18).

U.S. "interference" in El Salvador is escalating, according to Soviet propaganda. Although President Reagan stated on June 28 that the U.S. has no plans or intentions to send U.S. troops to Central America, Soviet commentators charged that the number of U.S. personnel in El Salvador is growing and that during the visit of President Alvaro Magana to Washington in June, "the possibility of dispatching regular U.S. army units" to El Salvador was raised (TASS International Service, June 19). The growing strength of the insurgents threatens to turn El Salvador into a second Vietnam (Moscow Television, June 29).

Honduras, according to Soviet propaganda, is being turned into a base for aggression against Nicaragua. The U.S. has prepared the Honduran army to strike against Nicaragua and has given increasingly open support to Somocista gangs hiding in Honduras (Moscow Domestic Service in Russian, June 18). TASS charged that the murder of two U.S. newspapermen in Honduras "was planned in advance and perpetrated by Somocista men and Honduran military, who, like their mentors from the CIA, clearly abhorred the position held by the two journalists" (Moscow TASS in English, June 23).

Nicaragua, it was charged, was the object of an "undeclared war" by the U.S., which is plotting the overthrow of the legitimate Sandinista government (TASS, May 5). Previous Soviet statements expressed only general political and moral support for Nicaragua (TASS, May 3). In June, Soviet commentators stepped up their rhetorical support for the Sandinistas but stopped short of stating what the Soviet response to U.S. moves might be (Pravda, June 11). As before, Soviet propaganda made no explicit reference to the Contadora initiative.

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PEACE MOVEMENTS AND PUBLIC OPINION  
IN WESTERN EUROPE

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